

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT**  
**SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING**  
**Minutes of January 11, 2022**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Julie H. Goodrich, Nathaniel Miller (absent), Charles Morse, and John Stevens. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Mark C. Anarumo (President, Norwich University), Daphne Larkin (Director of Media Relations & Community Affairs, Norwich University), Stephen Fitzhugh (Interim Provost, Norwich University), Kahwa C. Douoguih, Erin Hicks-Tibbles, Carolyn Stevens, and Elroy Hill.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Participants had the option of attending the meeting either in person or remotely through Go-to-Meeting.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** Those persons present were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. The remote contingent also participated as much as possible.

- III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

**IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):**

- a. President Mark C. Anarumo, Norwich University (NU).** President Anarumo stated classes for NU's Spring 2022 semester started yesterday (01/10/22) and there is every intention for full in-person instruction this year. He added that NU students were tested for COVID-19 on their return to campus and twenty (20) are in on-campus recovery after testing positive. President Anarumo noted NU has seen a record number of transfer students this semester. Many of these students had been at colleges or universities with remote learning only and they much preferred the in-person instruction NU now offers. President Anarumo said he is working with the presidents of other Vermont colleges and universities to develop proper procedures for the current school year. He said NU continues to have an aggressive testing schedule for its students and employees, who are required to be vaccinated including booster shots. Out-of-state students were required to provide evidence of a negative COVID-19 test before being allowed to attend classes. President Anarumo said he will keep the Northfield community and its leaders informed of any new developments on campus. He added that NU has acquired 5,000 COVID-19 rapid tests and results will be published daily on the NU COVID-19 Reporting Dashboard (<https://www.norwich.edu/covid-19-dashboard>). He then asked if the Select Board members had any questions.

Chair Maxwell asked if the NU campus was fully open to visitors. President Anarumo said it was but there is a mask requirement for indoor facilities. Residents also are welcome to use the trail system on Paine Mountain. Board member Goodrich had no questions but was grateful for all the good news. Board member Morse thanked President Anarumo for his excellent presentation. He also conveyed the gratitude of Cassie Morse, Manager of Northfield Farmers Market, for allowing drop-off locations on campus for those making online market purchases. President Anarumo confirmed that he is a big supporter of the Northfield Farmers Market. Board member Stevens also was thankful for the information provided tonight.

President Anarumo then stated that NU has hired four (4) new team members that will be joining the university in the near future. Doctor Karen Gaines will be the new Provost and Dean of the Faculty; Danielle Pelczarski has been named Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff; and Colonel William McCollough has been hired as Corps of Cadets Commandant and Vice President of Student Affairs. In addition, with the retirement of Tony Mariano after over thirty (30) years as NU's Athletic Director, Ed Hockenbury, Jr. has been hired as his successor. This will be a homecoming for Mr. Hockenbury as he was born and raised in Northfield while his father served as NU Men's Basketball Head Coach. President Anarumo is very pleased with these new hires and all that these talented individuals will bring to the NU Family and the Northfield community. Chair Maxwell thanked President Anarumo for his report and welcomed him to return anytime.

## **V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. **December 9, 2021 (Special Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the minutes. Board member Morse requested that the minutes show that the Highway Department's new loader will be shared with the Sewer Department. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **December 14, 2021 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the minutes. Board member Morse has a couple corrections regarding the discussion of the proposed mask mandate. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- c. **December 16, 2021 (Special Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

## **VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS**

- a. **Approval of Warrant #13-22.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #13-22 in the amount of \$402,057.35. Board member Stevens noted the municipality paid the electric bill for the Transfer Station. He asked if this was in accordance with the contract with All Clean Waste Services to operate the facility. Manager Schulz said it was not and asked if he should discuss this with All Clean. Chair Maxwell felt that since this issue was related to a contract, this probably would be best discussed in executive session. There was no objection. Board member Goodrich asked about a \$2,307 payment to fix sign damages. Manager Schulz said a NU student ran over the Route 12/12A sign a few weeks ago. We have filed a claim with the driver's insurance company, thus starting the reimbursement process. It was noted that of the total warrant amount, about \$223,000 was spent purchasing power for the Northfield Electric Department (NED) to be resold later to its customers. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through December 26, 2021.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$101,038.02. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

## **VII. SELECT BOARD**

- a. **Main Street Bridge Replacement Conceptual Plans.** Manager Schulz said the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) is working quickly on this project, which is currently scheduled for the summer of 2025. Designing the conceptual plans is the first step in the process to be followed by the engineering plans, etc. The conceptual plan proposes two (2) twelve-foot (12') travel lanes and two (2) nine-foot (9') breakdown lanes. The guard rails on the sides of the bridge are rather simple and there were photos provided of a similar bridge in Royalton, Vermont to show the design. VTrans representatives have informed Manager Schulz that it would be possible to install more decorative railing but the municipality would have to pay the additional cost. This probably is a topic the Select Board members would like to discuss further. Manager Schulz said the conceptual plans also envisions detouring vehicular traffic from South Main Street to Wall Street and then to the Water Street intersection with North Main Street. There also would be temporary two-way traffic on the south side of Depot Square, which would necessitate removing seven (7) parking spaces. Manager Schulz said this would be a quite a disruption but only should last about twelve (12) weeks. He added that agreeing to VTrans' suggested detour would keep the project's local share amount at five percent (5%). In addition, VTrans stated that it would not pay for a temporary pedestrian bridge near the work site. Chair Maxwell asked if VTrans representatives would attend an upcoming Select Board meeting to engage with the members on these matters. Manager Schulz said that was part of the process.

Board member Goodrich asked how much it would cost to rent a temporary pedestrian bridge. She is concerned about the impact of the bridge's closure on senior citizens who use it to access Dollar General, etc. Manager Schulz is unsure of the cost but said this information could be obtained from VTrans at that future meeting. Board member Morse believes the conceptual plan is ugly. He felt it would be acceptable for a bridge located in a rural setting but not for the center of town. Board member Morse felt a public discussion of how we want the bridge is vital. He personally envisions the possibility of parklets or other possible amenities on the sides of the bridge. Board member Morse noted Northfield should be receiving federal infrastructure funds in the near future and it might be possible to use some of this to pay for bridge enhancements that VTrans would not. Board member Stevens said the conceptual plans do seem to provide for East Street access during the project. He asked if the parking spaces in front of the Northfield Savings Bank would be affected. Manager Schulz believes the only parking spaces that would be temporarily eliminated are on the other side of the street on the south side of Depot Square. Board member Stevens thinks the guard rails on the conceptual plans don't meet the four-foot (4') height requirement. Chair Maxwell believes it is clearly necessary to have VTrans representatives attend an upcoming Select Board meeting in order to allow for public comment on these conceptual designs. Board member Morse said community input is definitely needed. Manager Schulz will make contact with VTrans so that this will happen in the near future.

- b. Possible Adoption of Australian Ballot Voting for Town Meeting 2022.** Manager Schulz said the Vermont State Legislature has approved a bill (S.172) that would allow the municipalities to hold this year's Town Meeting with Australian balloting only. The legislature approved and Governor Phil Scott signed into law similar legislation last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The current legislation only requires Governor Scott's signature to become law and there is every indication he will sign off before the end of this week. Given these facts, Manager Schulz asked the Select Board members how they wished to proceed should S.172 become law. All the Select Board members expressed their support for cancelling the open session for another year and holding an Australian ballot-only Town Meeting. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to have the 2022 Town Meeting warning voted by Australian ballot only provided the supporting state legislation has been approved in time. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- c. Final Rules - Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds.** Manager Schulz said the municipality has been making some tentative plans for use of the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) and other COVID-19 recovery funds based on the interim rules issued by the federal government. The US Department of Treasury now has issued the final rules governing use of these funds and Manager Schulz distributed copies to the Select Board members. He noted that there is more flexibility in the rules regarding accepted usages of these funds than there had been under the interim rules. For example, municipalities don't need to provide extensive documentation of pandemic-related revenue loss provided the amount is under \$10,000,000. The final rules also clarify that municipalities can reimburse employees adversely affected by the pandemic and recovery funds also can be used to hire additional employees to deal with matters related to post-pandemic local economic recovery, etc. Manager Schulz said there had been tentative plans to use some ARPA funds for the salary of the new full-time Economic Development Director and the final rules appear to support this action. The final rules also provide clear guidelines for using recovery funds to assist local businesses, individuals, non-profit organizations, etc. that were adversely affected by the pandemic. Chair Maxwell said he plans to contact Merry Kay Shernock tomorrow regarding her proposal to hold several community meetings in order to obtain local feedback regarding the proper use of the \$1,900,000 in ARPA funds coming to Northfield. He will report back soon to the other Select Board members regarding their discussion.

## **VIII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

- a. Northfield Falls Pedestrian Safety Study.** Manager Schulz said the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) has been asked to conduct a study of pedestrian safety in Northfield Falls with especial focus on the crosswalk located at the intersection of Vermont Route 12 and Cox Brook Road. CVRPC has hired the engineering firm DuBois & King to conduct this study and determine what safety measures should be taken. The study will commence by the end of February 2022 and should be completed within a couple months. The findings will be forwarded to the Select Board members for discussion and possible action. As this is a state highway, there also will need to be some coordination with VTrans.
- b. Economic Development Director.** The deadline for applications for this now full-time position was December 23, 2021 and five (5) have been received. Manager Schulz said this included two (2) from strong candidates. The hiring process will commence soon and the Economic Development Committee members will be thoroughly involved including the interview process, etc. The initial meetings will be remote-only.
- c. Special Select Board Meeting: January 13, 2022.** Manager Schulz stated this meeting has one agenda item: FY 2022/2023 Town Budget Recap & Review. It is hoped all remaining issues regarding the proposed budget will be resolved at this time and the budget can be finalized for voter approval on Town Meeting Day.
- d. Smart Meters.** Manager Schulz said the process of purchasing and installing smart meters, which continually monitor power usage and can be read remotely, for the Northfield Electric Department (NED) is speeding up. The Vermont Public Power Supply Authority (VPPSA) has hired consultants to provide installation designs for its member departments. There are funds in the NED budget for this and additional state and/or federal infrastructure improvement funds might become available. There will be a presentation on this at a future Select Board meeting.

## **IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS**

- a. Town Buildings & Energy Subcommittee.** Board member Goodrich, who serves on this subcommittee with Board member Stevens, would like a meeting scheduled in the near future in order to determine what building upgrades are needed. There have been recent concerns about the heating system in the Brown Public Library. Manager Schulz said a new second furnace should be installed within the next couple weeks.
- b. Coin Drop Requests.** Board member Morse asked what was the process for approving coin drop requests. Manager Schulz said the initial request should be sent to his office so that it can be added to the next Select Board's meeting agenda. The only coin drop request to have received Select Board approval in recent years is the one conducted annually by Northfield Observances on the morning of the Labor Day Parade. Board member Morse said a local group was interested in making a request so he will inform them of the process.
- c. Common Fountain Project.** Board member Stevens noted Norwich University engineering students will be working on a project to redesign the fountain so that it will recirculate the water it uses. The study should be ready for Select Board review by April 2022.
- d. Northfield Police Station Public Access.** Board member Stevens said a resident was trying to drop off expired prescription drugs at the Police Station's drop box but he couldn't get access to the building despite repeated phone calls. Board member Stevens asked if this was a pandemic-related problem. Manager Schulz said there have been some employee absences due to illness but the building is still open to the public. He will look into this particular circumstance.

- e. **Downtown Holiday Decorations.** Chair Maxwell wanted to thank all those who worked to install and maintain decorations on and around the Common over this past holiday season. They really did a great job and are a credit to the community.
- f. **COVID-19 Testing.** Chair Maxwell also wanted to commend the members of the Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) for all their efforts in providing COVID-19 testing to residents during this difficult time when such testing is in high demand. He drove by the Ambulance Bay earlier this evening and there was a line of vehicles stretching back onto Vermont Route 12 as far as Cumberland Farms. The current schedule is for COVID-19 testing at the Ambulance Bay on Mondays from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.; Tuesdays from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.; and Fridays from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. NAS members also provide testing in Williamstown on Wednesdays (9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.) and in Montpelier on Thursdays (3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.).

**X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED).**

- a. **Elroy Hill: CERV Food Shelf Concerns.** Mr. Hill would like the CERV Food Shelf volunteers working out of the Town Garage on Saturday mornings to have access to the building's bathrooms. He felt asking the volunteers to use outside portalets this time of year is unacceptable. Manager Schulz will look into this.

**XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), in order to discuss a contract matter with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 8:00 p.m.

Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Morse, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 8:23 p.m. No action was taken.

**XII. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to adjourn. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

These minutes were approved at the Select Board regular meeting of January 25, 2022.